

# **Jones Buys War Blondes**

**by Elroy Arno, 1915-1946**

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*When the boss orders something that doesn't exist,  
there's only one thing to do: manufacture it for him!*

MR. FOX, president of Fox and Laird Advertising Agency stepped out of his office and made queer, officious-sounding noises in his throat. The office staff immediately came to attention. Mr. Fox smiled a pleasant good morning, flexed a little finger at Willowby Jones and motioned for him to come in.

Willowby swallowed his Adam's-apple and blushed modestly. Mr. Fox had certainly been good to him since that last job for Barker Whiskey. Willowby stood up, placed his pen in the rack and smiled at Bernice Adams who sent him an adoring look across the width of the office. He walked quite firmly toward Mr. Fox's

office, yet with that sinking feeling in his stomach that came whenever he had to face the great man alone.

Willowby opened the door of the inner sanctum, stepped inside and waited. Mr. Fox was hard at work, as though he had already forgotten Willowby. Willowby Jones cleared his throat hesitantly.

"You—wished to see me, Mr. Fox?" Fox looked up, smiled hesitantly as though he had forgotten, then nodded. "Oh, yes! Sit down, Jones."

Willowby crossed the room and settled himself on the edge of a large leather chair. The clock ticked loudly on the wall. Mr. Fox's pen scratched across the bottom of a letter, then went to rest in the inkwell. Mr. Fox picked up a roll of paper from his desk and used it as a pointer to punctuate his message.

"Willowby, we need a thousand blondes."

Willowby swallowed and his face turned pink.

"Did you say—er—that is, blondes or bonds, sir?"

Fox looked impatient.

"Blondes, women, pretty girls."

Willowby sighed.

"Yes sir," he agreed. "I—I guess we do."

Mr. Fox cleared his throat.

"You don't quite understand," he said. "I've taken on a new advertising scheme for *Barbarous Blonde Hair Dye, Inc.* We've planned a campaign. I'll have a thousand lovely young ladies photographed on a gigantic stage. They all have to be young, beautiful and blonde. Nice start, don't you think?"

Willowby gulped.

"You want me..."

Mr. Fox was intent on business.

"...to locate the young ladies, Jones. Place an ad in the paper, make the rounds of the model agencies and let's have those young ladies ready for the picture tomorrow morning."

Willowby was staring hard at the wall behind Mr. Fox's head. He wondered just how many blondes there were in town. He hadn't seen very many. At least nothing to approach the figure Mr. Fox suggested.

"Do you—that is—anticipate any difficulty in finding that many?"

Fox looked grim.

"Nothing to it, Jones," he said. "Now, on the job and have those girls tomorrow morning. It will cost money, but there's a lot of it in this scheme."

Willowby Jones realized that he had not come with a properly prepared defense. There was nothing to do about it, nothing but find a thousand honey-haired young women before morning. Mr. Fox wasn't accustomed to having his plans disputed.

"Yes sir." Willowby stood up. His knees were wobbling strangely.

"I'll—I'll go to work on it at once," he said.

THE interview with Mr. Fox had taken place at two in the afternoon. In the next five hours, Willowby tracked the elusive blonde to its lair in every section of town. He visited every agency and spoke to every young steno who had golden tresses and a lunch hour that coincided with Mr. Jones' search. He walked every street and placed ads in every paper. At seven that evening, Willowby had, in sheer

desperation, rounded up exactly ten naturals and six reasonable facsimiles. To put it tersely, Willowby was on the verge of going blonde blind. He would have to meet Bernice Adams at seven. He had promised that they would stop at Henrici's for dinner, and there was no alibi that would protect him, much less a plea that he must spend the hours ahead searching for blonde women.

Bernice was waiting in a quiet corner of the restaurant. Willowby placed his hat carefully on the rack; smoothed his hair and sat down.

"Willowby Jones, where have you been all afternoon? We all saw Mr. Fox talking with you. When you went out right away, everyone wondered."

Willowby shook his head.

"Blondes," he said with deep feeling.

"What in the world...?"

"I've been looking for blondes. Mr. Fox says I have to find a thousand of them, all beautiful."

Bernice dropped the menu she had been studying, reached over and felt of Willowby's forehead.

"Willowby, darling! You're sure you feel quite well?"

Willowby shuddered.

"No I don't," he admitted. "Not by a darn sight."

He attempted a clearer explanation. When he had finished, Bernice looked very unhappy.

"But Willowby, there isn't a lovely blonde in town."

Willowby detected a touch of jealousy in her voice, and made the mistake of ignoring it.

"Oh, yes there is," he insisted. "I found a few of them, but not nearly enough."

"Next you'll be telling me you prefer blondes to me," Bernice pouted. "Do you?"

The thought had never occurred to Willowby.

Stark horror mirrored itself in his eyes.

"Oh dear, no," he said with great feeling. "I'm beginning to hate them."

The waiter came, orders were taken and they spent several minutes holding hands.

"You can't possibly find a thousand blondes before tomorrow, not even if there were a million dollars involved."

A violent crash came from the next table. They both turned to survey a slight, stoop-shouldered gentleman with neat white mustache who was picking up the remnants of a broken water glass. Something about the friendly washed-out eyes and the sad look in the stranger's face interested Willowby. He stared.

"Did—that is—did she say a million dollars?"

Willowby, naturally friendly, smiled unhappily.

"Yes," he admitted.

"For blondes?" the little man asked almost breathlessly.

"Yes."

The little man shook his head solemnly from side to side, seemed about to launch into a long discourse on the subject, then hunched his shoulders defensively.

"My goodness, that's a lot of money," he murmured, and turned away. Willowby watched while he shook his head again and lapsed into silence.

Bernice smiled across the table and touched her head meaningly. Then she winked.

"Now, Willowby, about this business Mr. Fox has dreamed up. How can we get out of it?"

Willowby squared his shoulders.

"To begin with," he said, "you're not mixed up in it and I'm not going to have you lose your job on my account. In the second place, I can get out of it by handing in my resignation tomorrow morning."

Bernice gasped.

"But—surely it's not that bad?" Willowby shrugged.

"You work for Mr. Fox. You know him as well as I do."

"But surely he wouldn't fire you?"

"Mr. Fox would fire his grandmother if the quality of her cooking fell off for more than twenty-four hours."

THEY left the restaurant together at eight. Willowby noticed, as they left, that the little man who had spoken to him paid his bill and followed. A cloud of misunderstanding hung between himself and Bernice. She expected him to face Mr. Fox, and admit that he couldn't find the blondes. Willowby would rather have faced a cyclone.

It was a short trip across town, but two bus transfers were involved. As they left the last bus and walked up the quiet block to Bernice Adams' house, the little man who had broken the glass was still behind them.

Bernice didn't notice him, but Willowby had turned twice, catching the stranger's shadow across the walk.

Their good-night was extended, although not very tender. Willowby knew that chasing blondes around all night did not appeal to Bernice. He hated to quarrel with her, but his job had been clearly mapped out for him.

"But—it's so useless," Bernice insisted. Her face had become quite red. "You just can't realize how useless it is."

Willowby shook his head stubbornly.

"I know Fox wants a thousand blondes," he said. "If he wanted a thousand elephants, he'd still insist on getting them. I better say good-night."

Bernice stamped her foot impatiently.

"You just want me to go in so you can go chasing pretty girls," she insisted. "Well, I will, and I just hope you're up all night looking for those nasty, washed-out creatures."

It wasn't a very satisfactory parting, but Willowby had no other choice. He waited until she had stamped angrily into the house, turned away and saw that the little man was still following. He had stepped behind a tree half-way down the block.

Willowby's feet carried him automatically toward the bus. He boarded it and slumped wearily into a rear seat. His follower rushed from the shadows near the curb and entered behind Willowby. The man knew he was spotted now. He came toward Willowby hesitantly, sat down, and stared straight ahead.

The bus moved forward. The old gentleman turned slightly, as though trying to gain courage for conversation.

"You probably think I'm an awful pest?"

Willowby was surprised at the mildness in his voice.

"Oh, I don't know," he admitted. "I guess you're lonely, or something."

The little gentleman shuddered.

"Oh, yes, I do get lonely. This time it's something more important though. I heard you say you had to have a lot of blonde young ladies."

Willowby nodded.

"Well," the old gent went on hurriedly, "by actual count there are only six hundred blondes in this city at present, and not many of them are very nice looking."

Willowby Jones shot a startled glance at his new-found friend.

"Now, don't misunderstand me," the other begged, his face turning red. "You see, I made it my business to find out. I had to."

WILLOWBY liked his companion.

Now that they had met, he was impressed by the sincere friendliness of the old gentleman.

"Maybe you could tell that to my boss," he said suddenly. "Say, my name's Willowby Jones. Maybe we ought to know each other."

The little man looked hesitant.

"You weren't fooling when you said there was a million dollars in this deal, were you?"

Willowby hesitated.

"I guess it would be worth quite a lot if we could round up all those blondes for Mr. Fox. No, not a million dollars, but it least a nice bonus."

"Maybe you could share some of it, if I did all the work?"

Willowby would gladly have turned the whole task over to more capable hands.

"I'll give you half of everything I make if you can help me out. You just said there weren't that many blondes in the city."

The little man thought for a moment, then offered his hand.

"All right," he said. "My name is Philbert U. Quinby. The U is for Useless, but I dropped it as a young man. Mr. Jones, I'll *make* those blondes for you."

Willowby recoiled, horrified.

"That is," Philbert U. Quinby went on hurriedly, "I have a hair-ray that, when focused on any hair, turns it to a lustrous blonde color."

Willowby felt his eyes bulge out so far that he considered the idea of pushing them back in with his finger tips.

"That's—that's never been done," he protested.

Quinby shook his head.

"They said that when Columbus wanted to cross the Atlantic, didn't they?"

"But why haven't you used the machine before?" Willowby asked. "Surely it would make a fortune for you."

Philbert U. Quinby blushed.

"I'm frightened of young ladies," he confessed. "I keep trying to get enough courage to try it out. Every time I approach a young woman I find myself blushing terribly. It just doesn't work. Please, would you help me out? I'm sure we'd make a great success."

Willowby Jones was on the spot. Bernice was already angry. Mr. Fox would have him hanged on the nearest lamp post if those blondes didn't show up sometime tomorrow, and now Philbert U. Quinby was putting the issue squarely up to Willowby. What if the hair-ray didn't work. He'd make a triple fool of himself.

There was no choice.

"You really think this hair-ray will work?" Willowby asked.

Quinby leaned close to his ear.

"I tried it on a big black rat," he whispered. "That rat is the prettiest blonde in the world right now."

"Rats aren't women," Willowby thought with a smile, "but some women are rats."

"We'll try," he said aloud. "Where's the machine?"

Quinby was radiant.

"I'll have it for you in a jiffy," he promised. "We'll drop off the bus in the Loop. I have a modest room close to the river. We'll go there."

BERNICE ADAMS opened the front door a crack, saw Willowby on the porch and pushed the door wide. She was clad in a blue robe, with pajama legs and small slippers visible below it. Her eyes widened as she recognized the little man they had seen at the restaurant.

"Willowby!" Bernice was frightened and angry at the same time. "It's after two in the morning. What are you doing here?"

"We're looking for a rat!" Willowby blushed. "That is, I mean we're looking for someone who will try the hair-ray machine."

Quinby, still in the background, was moving restlessly from one foot to the other. His face was a violent red. He wanted to run away. Under his left arm he carried a small, square, black box.

"Willowby Jones!" Bernice had stepped outside, closing the door quietly behind her. "You're drunk!"

Willowby shook his head quickly.

"Sober," he insisted. "Stone sober. It's like this..."

He launched into a full explanation of his meeting with Mr. Quinby and the result of their conversation.

"Now," he finished, "I wonder if you'll let us use the ray on you. That rat was the prettiest blonde I've ever seen. It's sure to work."

His eagerness and wish to do the job right touched Bernice. There was a powerful sales talk in what he had to offer.

"But how do I know it won't *ruin* my hair," she protested. "It doesn't sound possible."

"It worked on the rat," Quinby offered quickly.

"Sure it did," Willowby backed him up. "Of course, you're not a rat, but I'm sure..."

"Thanks," Bernice said a little grimly. "Willowby, this really means a lot to you, doesn't it?"

Willowby gulped.

"A job," he said. "And I guess it's just the idea of not being able to handle this thing right. Mr. Fox gave me the responsibility and I'd like to prove..."

Bernice nodded. Her eyes blurred a little.

"You're sweet," she said, and kissed him. Philbert Quinby backed away a few steps, as though afraid she might try to do the same to him. "Get out you're old machine. I'm ready."

Quinby passed the box to Willowby with an eagerness that indicated how long he had waited for this opportunity. Willowby opened the box and drew out an elongated tube with a small, round casing on one end. Attached to this box was an electrical cord.

"We need an electric outlet," he said. "Maybe in the living room?"

Bernice seemed doubtful.

"If we wake Dad up..."

Willowby shuddered.

"We'll be very quiet," he said.

They entered the darkened house. Bernice found a lamp in the corner and turned it on. Mr. Quinby remained a safe distance from her as Willowby plugged in the cord. Inside the hair-ray a little motor started to hum.

"Just hold it over her head so the light touches her hair," Quinby offered.

A wide beam of light shot from the tube of the machine. Bernice sat down.

"Is that all there is to it?" Willowby asked.

Quinby nodded and started to make queer, mouse-like sounds in his throat. He looked frightened.

"Get it over with," Bernice whispered.

Willowby clutched the tube lightly, aimed the ray at Bernice's hair and closed his eyes.

"My goodness, it's hot," Bernice said. "Hurry, Willowby."

Illustration:

Under the brilliant rays, Bernice's hair began to change color.

FROM his corner by the door, Mr. Quinby gasped. Willowby opened his eyes. Bernice had seated herself on a heavy mohair chair. Her hair had suddenly turned a rich, golden yellow. The chair had done the same. The chair had been blue with red trimming. Now both the chair and Bernice were very blonde.

"It works!" Willowby's voice rose in a shout, then died abruptly as he remembered old man Adams snoring on the second floor. "It works."

Bernice sprang to her feet and ran to the mirror. A delighted gasp escaped her lips.

"Willowby, I'm beautiful." She returned and threw her arms about him. "I'm prettier than I ever was—say I am."

Willowby was so happy that he could say nothing. Words formed in his throat and caught there. He kissed her, then she released herself and rushed to Philbert U. Quinby.

"You're the most wonderful little man in the world." She planted a big kiss on his cheek. "You're more famous than—than Edison."

Mr. Quinby's blood pressure sent brilliant red to the top of his smooth head.

"My goodness," Mr. Quinby said weakly. "I've never been kissed before. I do think you're even more pretty than my blonde rat. I—I like being kissed."

He looked hopeful.

"And now," Bernice said. "You've got to get out of here right away. Dad will be hard enough to handle in the morning. I don't want him to know you had anything to do with this."

"You've got a blonde chair now," Willowby said. "Do you think I ought to buy a new one?"

Bernice smiled.

"I think if you've got a part interest in this machine, you can buy a houseful pretty soon."

Willowby's eyes widened. He hadn't thought of that.

IT wasn't too late to place an ad in the *Daily Record*. Willowby took care of the ad, made arrangements early the following morning with Mr. Fox to reserve a large room at the Hotel Harold, and waited for girls to show up. The ad read:

We offer, absolutely free of charge, an opportunity for you to become the owner of a ravishing head of pure, golden-blond hair. The process, not a dye, is brand new. After today, the process will cost at least fifty dollars. For advertising purposes, the chance will be given to the first thousand girls free of charge.

Only those under thirty and attractive will be considered.

Only those under thirty and attractive will be considered. By nine o'clock, the Hotel Harold was overflowing with women. Willowby had never seen so many lovely girls at once in his life. He hoped that Bernice, who had already caused a riot at the office, would not come to the Hotel Harold.

Jealousy was a horrible thing and he thanked his lucky stars that he had evaded her wrath so neatly the night before.

At first, Willowby's free customers were a bit reluctant to chance the change from dark to light. Philbert Quinby, however, used the hair-ray swiftly and with an expert touch. With the first three dozen applicants turned away satisfied, both men had more work than they wanted.

As each girl left, Willowby passed her a card with the name Fox and Laird printed across it. The card carried this message:

Not only is the process free of charge, but you will be paid ten dollars if this advertising firm is allowed to photograph you.

AT noon it was over. Philbert U. Quinby, very much at home with his new task, had actually learned to love being close to women. He put the machine away reluctantly, after he had made blondes of at least a dozen women over the set quota.

"Girls are pretty nice, aren't they?" he said mildly, after the hotel personnel had locked the door and formed lines to prevent further raids on the room. "I think I'll just make a few blondes every day for the fun of it. There seems to be no end to their gratitude."

Willowby didn't argue the point. He had accomplished his purpose. Mr. Fox had his photographs, and he had publicity. He knew that Quinby had a fortune in the



hair-ray machine, but he felt that Quinby owed him no part of it. In fact, Willowby Jones owed Quinby for the success that might have been a disaster.

They ate lunch together, were located at once by members of the press, and Willowby modestly gave Fox and Laird another thousand bucks' worth of publicity. Mr. Quinby was mobbed as he left the restaurant and had to sign autographs for half an hour while Willowby waited.

It ended at the restaurant. Mr. Quinby promised to meet him the following day and Willowby Jones went home for a complete rest. Willowby was happy as he entered the lobby of the Acorn Arms Apartment Hotel. His happiness dissolved into horror soon after. The wart who adorned the desk on the lobby croaked at him as he passed.

"A Miss Adams has been trying to reach you by phone for the past hour. She sounds plenty mad."

Willowby frowned. Could Bernice be jealous of his morning's activity? He found the booth, dialed the office and waited.

"I'd like to speak to Miss Bernice Adams."

Sour Puss, on the office switchboard, recognized him, moaned something about people who didn't work for a living, and plugged his line through to Bernice's desk.

"Willowby?" Bernice's voice was filled with terror.

Willowby caught his breath.

"Yes?"

A sob came to him over the wire.

"Willowby, you've got to get out of town right away."

"Out of town?" Willowby gasped. "But..."

"It's that hair machine," Bernice sobbed. "I'm wearing my hat this minute, or the secret would be out. This morning before I left for work, all the hair on that overstuffed chair fell out. Now it's coming out of my head. Willowby, all those girls, a thousand of them, will be bald by tomorrow. Do you realize what that means?"

Willowby gulped. Then Quinby's machine hadn't worked, after all. The rat was tough. It could take it. Now a chair and a thousand blondes had already, or were going to lose every hair they had.

"My goodness," he said. "Bernice, you—you'll never forgive..."

Her voice grew lower.

"There are three girls in Mr. Fox's office this minute," she said. "Never mind how I feel about it. I can't see you torn apart by all those women and then tossed in jail. I don't know if they've found out yet, but all three of the girls with Mr. Fox are wearing their hats."

Willowby wanted to run. He wanted to run as fast as he could until he reached some strange, safe place like Africa. He thought of poor little Philbert (U for Useless) Quinby and knew he'd been named to fit.

"I'll get a ticket to Toledo," he said breathlessly. "I'll write. Let me know what happens."

A hunted man. A man for whom the electric chair would be a safe place compared to the wrath he would face here.

"But hurry," Bernice went on. "Mr. Fox just came out. He looks terribly angry. You'd better buy a ticket to California."

Willowby grunted.

"Or Berlin," he corrected. "It's safer there."

HE located Philbert Quinby quite easily. Mr. Quinby was loafing in his room. He was enjoying a copy of *Girls—A Magazine for Bachelors*.

Willowby almost knocked the door down in his eagerness to get in. He heard Mr. Quinby's voice from behind the door and his slippered feet on the floor.

"Just a moment, for heaven's sake," Mr. Quinby was protesting. "Can't a man get a little relaxation?"

Willowby broke in upon him eagerly, two tickets in his hand.

"Get your stuff packed in a hurry. We're going to California."

"But I like it here," Quinby protested. "Besides—the hair-ray..."

"That's it!" Willowby backed to the door, making sure it was locked behind him. "The hair-ray didn't work—that is, not the way we expected. How would you like to face the wrath of a thousand bald-headed women?"

Philbert Quinby started to turn a pastel shade of green. He tried to speak but his lips only slapped together silently. Finally, with gestures, he managed to convey the idea of absolute and complete fright. He regained use of his vocal organs.

"Bald...?"

He mouthed the word slowly. Willowby nodded.

"Bald," he agreed. "A thousand lovely young girls with scalps as smooth as marbles."

Quinby started to shake.

"I think," he said falteringly. "That the trip would be good for both of us. We need a rest."

He started tossing his clothing into a bag.

PHILBERT QUINBY tossed the paper to one side and stared out the car window at the telephone poles that flashed by in smooth precision. They had been on the Fruit State Limited for the better part of eight hours. Six hundred miles separated them both from the horror they had so recently faced. The copy of the *Daily Record*, which Quinby had just finished reading, told the story with pictures. The pictures were the before and after type.

The story was quite clear and not at all reassuring:

The city was thrown into an uproar today when over a thousand young ladies suddenly found themselves losing every hair on their pretty heads. Investigation by this paper brought to light the following facts:

Two men, posing as beauty experts, advertised for, and found, a number of girls willing to have their hair changed to a "lustrous, golden blonde." The culprits, now the object of a careful search by the police, turned hair blonde as advertised, but their talents went further than that.

Today, every girl who answered the ad has lost every last hair in her head. The *Daily Record* warns these two men that the wholesale destruction of such beauty is a crime unpardonable by the victims and public as well. They will be searched out and punished in a manner to fit the crime.

The names of both men are not known. One of them, Willowby R. Jones, worked for the Pox and Laird Advertising Agency. However, Mr. Pox, president of this company, has professed no knowledge of the matter. He refuses to accept liability, as he tells the press Jones is no longer in his employ and that Pox and Laird knew nothing of the wild scheme.

It will be only a matter of hours before these criminals will be brought to justice for their crime against society.

Willowby had a headache. It was worse that anything the willies had ever given him. He felt punch-drunk from lack of sleep and he wondered what Bernice would look like without that lovely growth of blue-black hair.

"It looks as though we'd better give up," Mr. Quinby said at last. "By nature I'm a mild man. Perhaps if I were to tell them about the rat. He didn't lose his hair. Maybe everything will be all right."

"Damn that rat," Willowby said savagely. "Because of a blonde rat, we're facing something that we'll never get out of. All the time, you know what I keep thinking?"

Quinby didn't know and Willowby chuckled. It was a low, dry chuckle that expressed no humor.

"What's old man Adams going to do with that mohair chair. It must look a little worn without any hair on it. At least I've got even with him for those nights he wound the clock in the front hall until I took the hint and went home."

Quinby looked a little shocked.

"Do you think this is the time for humor," he asked. "We are in a—a hell of a spot."

Willowby considered that.

"You haven't had much to do with women before this episode, have you, Mr. Quinby?"

Quinby shook his head.

"When you speak of hell, you're speaking of a mild, pleasant climate, compared with what's waiting for us back home. No, Mr. Quinby, we'd better not go back. I've been thinking of something. Have you ever heard of the Foreign Legion?"

Mr. Quinby turned a shade paler.

"No!" he croaked. "Not that! We'll have to think of something else."

PHILBERT U. QUINBY was gone.

Willowby had no doubt of Mr. Quinby's absence. The note had been pinned to Willowby's pillow.

"Dear Mr. Jones (it read),

I don't think it would be wise of us to join the Foreign Legion, or anything so drastic. I feel, in a great measure, responsible for all this. I am returning to the city at once and will advise you if there is any way I can clear your name. Meanwhile, contact me at my home address.

Sincerely yours,

Philbert Useless Quinby.

Willowby read the note three times before he wadded it up carefully and slipped it into the bottom of his suitcase. He dressed carefully and went to the dining-car for breakfast. There were no morning papers in the car so he knew nothing more about his predicament than he had last night.

Willowby ate slowly, with no appetite for food. Quinby had been a good sport. Why hadn't they both returned long ago and faced the music? More and more, as Willowby thought about the little man facing the city alone, was he in favor of following Mr. Quinby with all possible speed.

If they sued, he remembered that you can't milk a rubber glove, so what would it cost him?

He had no money to begin with and no job. It would all cool down in a few more weeks and the girls could buy wigs. At least, he thought wryly, the wig business would flourish.

How would Bernice look in a wig? Willowby shuddered. She had seen him through a tough spot. He would not let her down now. In later years maybe he'd become a hero. He could hear them saying:

"There goes Willowby Jones. His wife's hair isn't real, but Jones is a loyal soul. He's standing by her through thick and thin."

Willowby worked himself into such a fever of loyalty that he failed to notice that for the past several minutes the train had been stopped at a small station called Stumpville, and the conductor was outside, arguing with three men.

He turned toward the window to get a better view. Good lord, it was his boss, Mr. Fox! No wonder he hadn't noticed the town. The train wasn't scheduled to stop here. Evidently Fox and the men who were with him had found out from Mr. Quinby where Willowby was headed for. They were after him.

Willowby arose quickly and headed for his compartment. Half way to the end of the car he stopped short. Fox was just entering the diner.

Willowby's boss looked extremely unpleasant right now. He shouted and waved a hand as Willowby turned to run.

"Jones, for heaven's sake, man, are you crazy?"

Willowby stopped, turned slowly and waited for Fox to come abreast of him.

"No, sir," he said as respectfully as possible. "I just had an idea I wouldn't be going back so soon. I really haven't had any vacation yet."

Fox frowned and grasped Willowby's arm.

"The honeymoon is over, Jones," he said. "You're going back to face the music."

Willowby cleared his throat miserably.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I guess that's the best way."

THE offices of Fox and Laird were buzzing with excitement. Willowby knew little more when he arrived, than he had on the train. He did know that Fox, and the two men who were officers of Barbarous Blonde Hair Dye Inc. had taken a plane half way across the country to find him. He wasn't sure just what the punishment was to be, but whatever happened, he would face it for Bernice's sake.

Wedge between Fox, Mr. Seltz and Mr. Walters of Barbarous Blonde, Willowby went through the opened glass doors, across the office and into Mr. Fox's private room. Here he was due for several violent surprises.

Bernice was waiting for him. She had a queer, short growth of yellow fuzz on her head as though her hair had recently been clipped. She rushed forward, threw her arms about Willow-by and smothered him with kisses.

"I'm so glad, so darn glad!" She was crying. "I was afraid you'd do something awful before they found you."

"You—told them?"

Bernice only hugged him tighter.

"I told them what train you were on. Mr. Quinby came to me when he returned. He wanted to come here, but Mr. Fox insisted on handling it personally."

"But—but I don't understand." Willowby protested.

Mr. Fox, as he usually did under such conditions, took the floor with a broad smile. He was rubbing his palms together in a satisfied manner.

"You will, Jones," he insisted. "You will. The young ladies lost their hair, but within twenty-four hours it started to grow in all over again. This time even the roots are blonde. Experts agree that within three weeks every woman who stood under that machine will have the softest, finest natural blonde hair ever conceived."

Willowby's heart suddenly bounced from under the heavy load it had been carrying and started to pound with relief.

"Quinby?" he managed to mutter. "He's safe. He didn't kill himself, or anything?"

Mr. Fox would not be rushed.

"Philbert U. Quinby will be discussed in due time," he said. "But, first, the railroad ticket agency has wired you a vote of thanks. They've just sold over a thousand round-trip vacation tickets to various resorts. It seems that these young women want to get out of town until their hair grows in. There has been a fine bonus mentioned that they feel you deserve."

"Isn't that lovely, dear," Bernice asked. "Dad won't be angry if you use part of the money to buy a new chair."

Willowby sighed.

"Wait until Quinby hears of this," he said. "It's—it's beyond..."

"Did someone mention my name?"

THE voice, very low and modest, came from the doorway behind Willowby. He whirled around to find Philbert U. Quinby who had just come in. Quinby was done up beautifully in a gray business suit, a huge black cigar and a smile of prosperity.

A round of applause went up. Mr. Seltz and Mr. Walters stepped to Quinby's side, as though to bathe in the light of his greatness. Mr. Fox's chest bulged under his vest.

"Jones, I'd like you to meet Phil U. Quinby, President of Barbarous Blonde Hair Treatment, Inc. Mr. Quinby has offered us a magnificent advertising contract for the coming five years."

Willowby's jaw dropped.

"Philbert—" he managed. "Philbert! Well, I'm damned!"

Philbert Quinby took his hand, shook it, and stepped closer to Willowby.

"When they found out I was the one who had the machine they kicked out their president and hired me. Starting out at sixty thousand a year and royalties on every machine. Not bad, huh?"

"But—how...?"

"I went to Miss Adams when I came back. Her hair was already growing again. I saw big possibilities." He hesitated, then grinned. "And, Willowby, don't let Fox kid you. He's hiring you back because I insisted that you get ten thousand a year for handling my company's business. Will that be agreeable with you?"

"Philbert," Willowby was overcome. "You're—you're a..."

"Forget it, Mr. Jones." Quinby raised his voice so that all might hear. "We'll go a long way, you and I. You've probably wondered what the U. stands for in my middle name?"

Eyebrows were raised expectantly and Willowby remembered Philbert Useless Quinby.

Quinby didn't hesitate.

"Philbert Unusual Quinby is the full name," he said quietly. "I'm a little modest about using that middle name."

Gestures and murmurs of approval, and Quinby bent close to Willowby again.

"Remember that blonde rat that got us started?" Willowby nodded.

"That rat's got a gold cage on my desk," Quinby said solemnly. "When it dies, well erect a fifty-foot monument to it at the corporation's gate. And an inscription: *Philbert U. Quinby—from rats to riches.*"

"Or, You Can't Go Wrong With Barbarous Blonde," Willowby added appreciatively.

Quinby swelled with importance.

"Get started on that, Fox," he said. "Mr. Jones has a fine slogan there. See that he gets full cooperation."

Mr. Fox seemed to deflate.

"Yes, sir," he said humbly. "Right away, sir."

"Cooperation," Willowby said. "It is a wonderful thing."

